

Division staff also continued the microbial monitoring program for the presence of *Salmonella* and *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat and poultry products. Our policy is zero tolerance for the pathogens. The Division participated in a number of national programs such as protein-fat-free (PFF) control, nitrosoamine detection in bacon, antibiotic/bacterial inhibitor residue program, and sampling of raw ground beef for *E. coli* O157:H7.

Division inspectors monitored sampling of animal carcasses for *Escherichia coli* (biotype I) to verify the plant's process control. Each commercial slaughter establishment is required to collect samples using the sponging method. At least one sample per week is required, starting in June every year and continuing sampling until June the next year, or until 13 consecutive tests are acceptable. In the last fiscal year, *E. coli* testing of carcasses proved that process control measures applied by plants were adequate.

All incoming raw materials, non-meat ingredients and processing technologies, such as cooking, curing or smoking, were under our inspectors' control. Operational deviations were recorded on Noncompliance Reports, and in cases of serious non-compliance, processing operations were temporarily suspended pending required corrective actions.

In addition to providing daily and continuous inspection in all commercial establishments, Division staff inspected 42 custom plants on a risk assessment basis. Although farmers' animals are exempt from mandatory antemortem examinations and postmortem inspections, the facilities, equipment, sanitation, water supply, sewage system, rodent control, etc., at all custom plants were subject to our reviews.

As of the last day of FY 2001, the Division had licensed 182 meat and poultry distributors. These facilities were subject to prelicensing review to ensure that technical requirements for such distributors were met. The licensed distributors were not allowed to conduct processing in any form. After licensing, they were subject to scheduled compliance reviews at least annually if no major deficiencies were found. Any significant deficiency triggered more frequent compliance reviews.

FY 2001 was the first full year field personnel had of utilization of laptop computers. The laptops have proven to be extremely beneficial for communication (e-mail), and instant access to vast federal resources, including all FSIS information sources, scientific data and all current initiatives in improving food safety. We have succeeded in customizing state forms and the majority of inspection data is now transmitted electronically. Once the federal server is capable of receiving PBIS data, we will enter the era of paperless inspection.